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[The following piece was written
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A Dissertation on Family Prayer.

TRUE religion is the duty, and forms the defence, of man. While Christians are commanded to take to themselves the whole armor of God, they are directed "to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." The scriptures inculcate the duty of maintaining at all times a frame of mind which is friendly to devotion, and which will utter itself in the various kinds of prayer, as duty requires. Supplication is to be made *in the Spirit*, or with a humble reliance on the influences of the Holy Spirit, who can help our infirmities, and teach us to pray aright.

It is common to all who acknowledge the existence of a Deity, to fly to him as supplicants in seasons when they feel themselves to be in great danger, and despair of help from an arm of flesh. When the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, so that the ship in which the prophet Jonah was sailing, was like to be broken,

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"the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his God." It is a plain dictate of natural religion, not only that we ought to look to God for help in a time of trouble, but that we ought also to ask him for favors which we need, and return thanks unto him for those which we have received.

To learn the nature of that prayer which is acceptable to the only living and true God, we must have recourse to the revelation which he hath made of his character and will in his holy word. By this we are taught, that acceptable prayer consists in pouring out the desires of our hearts to God, for things which are agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with a confession of our sins, and a thankful acknowledgment of divine mercies. This is the only kind of prayer with which any gracious promise is certainly connected. All who pray in this manner will be heard of their Father who is in heaven, and will receive according to the ultimate desire of their hearts; which is, that God may be glorified in and by them, and by all creatures and events. Praying

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souls will not be sent away empty, nor will one of them be shut out of the New Jerusalem.

Prayer may be considered under two general heads, *secret* and *social*.

Secret prayer is made by an individual when retired from all his fellow-creatures. God and himself only are privy to the performance. If one in the performance of this duty, strives to give notice of it to others, he discovers a proud, pharisaical temper. Matthew vi. 5, 6. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Secret prayer is of high importance. When it is maintained according to its nature and design, the soul is in a healthful and prosperous state. How often have Christians confessed, that their declensions could be traced back to the neglect, or coldness, of closet duties?

Under the general head of secret prayer is to be classed *ejaculatory* prayer. This consists in a secret, informal pouring out of the heart to God; either when the subject is at labor or at rest, alone or in company. Devout persons often lift up their hearts to their Almighty Friend, in a way of adoration, or confession, or petition, or praise, as occasions occur. Their meditations naturally run into some part or other of prayer, without any formal attempt to collect their thoughts. The ob-

jects around them bring their divine Author to mind. A sense of their sin and danger, and of mercies received, engages them without the formality of words, to adore, confess, supplicate, and to offer thanksgiving. They pour out their hearts to God in groanings which cannot be uttered. This kind of prayer is very well understood, and is practised much, by persons of eminent piety; hence they are said to *pray always*.

Social prayer implies the union of two or more persons in the performance of the duty. The language used is supposed, in general, to be the language of the number engaged. This duty may be performed either in the family, or in the house of God, as well as on many other occasions. Should each member of a family, or of a congregation, utter no word, or give no well known sign to each other, of their thoughts, in their devotion, their prayer would be of the secret or ejaculatory kind, though they were all gathered in one place, and each one poured out his heart to God. In social prayer, some one person leads with an audible voice, or all present pronounce with their lips a form of prayer in which they are agreed. Social prayer cannot be performed in the way in which the other kinds are, which have been mentioned.

The design of this dissertation is to consider particularly, *Family Prayer*; and to urge its importance. I shall pursue the following method, in discussing the subject.

I. Show that family prayer is a reasonable and scriptural duty of great importance. And,

II. I shall consider some of the objections which have been bro't against family prayer.

I. I am to attempt to show that family prayer is a reasonable and scriptural duty of great importance.

By family prayer is meant, prayer offered up in the audience of all the members of the family, by the head of the family, or some person under his direction. To this is supposed to be added the daily reading of the holy scriptures, in the hearing of those who are called to join in the devotion. I have styled this duty a *reasonable*, as well as a scriptural one; because it is capable of being clearly shown to be a reasonable service, and is a subject of rational demonstration. This duty is an *important* one. It is not to be classed with paying tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin; but is to be reckoned among the weightier matters of the law.—The duty of family prayer may be argued,

1. From family trials. We have troubles in the present state which imply society; or that a number of persons is involved in them at the same time, and in connexion with each other.

Families do not remain long without family trials. It is highly proper that under these they concur in heart and voice in addressing the Infinite Majesty; praying for the removal of the evils which they feel, deprecating those which threaten, and humbling themselves under his mighty hand. Are not those who are called to weep together, called upon by divine providence to unite in carrying their burdens to the throne of grace? Is there not something which shocks every reflecting mind, in beholding dangerous sickness in a family, and which, while it spreads and threatens desolation, does not excite the head of the family to look to God for help, by praying

before his household? Surely, all will join in saying, there is not the fear of God in that house. If his name were revered under that roof, we should hear the voice of supplication in this day of distress.

This familiar view of the duty of family prayer from family trials, furnishes an argument for the constant support of social worship in every family. It is unknown when trouble will come. We ought to be prepared for it at all times. We cannot be in a proper frame to meet it, without the spirit of devotion. God is to be worshipped by us in a social, as well as in a private manner, be our circumstances prosperous or adverse. This leads me to argue the duty of family prayer, from,

2. The reception of family deliverances and mercies. Some of the greatest blessings of life are of a domestic nature. There is something very beautiful and striking in the apparent union of families, after the reception of deliverances and mercies, in offering praise to their Creator, Preserver, Benefactor and Redeemer.

The duty we are now considering, has appeared so plain and reasonable, that even the Pagans have had their household-worship. However erroneous their notion of household gods is, and however absurd is their theology at large, yet from their conduct in carrying worship into their houses, we may infer that family prayer is an obvious dictate of the light of nature. The heathens who offered thanks to the images under their roofs, will rise up in judgment against those who, under the light of divine revelation, refuse to pay homage, with their families, to the only living and true God; whose loving-kindness they ought

to shew forth in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.

After the deluge, we find Noah with his family erecting an altar unto the Lord; for the purpose of not only offering family prayer, but family praise, for delivering them from the deluge which swept away the inhabitants of the old world at large. (Gen. viii.) After Jacob returned from Padan-aram, he "said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments. And let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." (Gen. xxxv. 2, 3.)

These instances, with others which might be adduced from sacred history, prove the duty of family worship. The altar of praise was an altar of prayer, at which the families of Noah and Jacob united. Instances are daily occurring in which families are required to unite in rendering thanks to God for deliverances and mercies. This duty implies family prayer.

3. A third argument to enforce the duty of family prayer, may be taken from the hopeful good influence which it may have on the youth in families. Most households are made up of a majority of young persons; and it is rare to find a family without a child or a youth in it. In the morning of life, the mind receives a direction, even on moral and religious subjects, which is seldom lost. Hence it is of the greatest importance that the first impressions be good, or favorable to a pious course of living.

While the young behold the

heads of families devoutly calling on God, morning and evening, confessing their sins, asking forgiveness through the Mediator, petitioning for favors for themselves and others, and offering thanksgiving for benefits they have received, there is certainly, according to experience, much more reason to hope that their minds will be seriously impressed with these subjects, than though they never heard a prayer uttered in the house of their education. We acknowledge that the hearts even of the most profligate are in the hand of God, and that he can by his Spirit take one from a synagogue of Satan, and make him a member of his own family; but this fact furnishes no argument against parental fidelity, nor does it diminish the obligations of heads of families to train up those committed to their care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The ability of the Most High is not the rule of our duty, but the word which he hath given to us. By this, as well as providence, we learn, that a pious education has a strong tendency to form the mind to a wise and good course. While the members of families hear the heads of them praying, from day to day, for the sorrowful and the afflicted, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the righteous and the wicked, the church and the world, and for their souls in particular, is it not much more probable that they will feel the worth of gospel salvation, than if it were not in that solemn manner set before their minds?

4. The duty of family prayer may be inferred from its tendency to prevent openly vicious practices from being allowed in houses. There are some vices which throw

families into such disorder as to prevent a regular arrangement in any thing, and consequently shut out seasons of collecting for devotion. Let much of the night be spent in gay company and vain amusements, evening prayer will be omitted, and so also will prayer in the morning; because this will be consumed in sleep to make up for the loss of rest in the proper time. Besides, when animal nature has been exhausted by amusements, a torpid and careless frame of mind usually follows, which is very remote from a disposition to call upon God.

Can we believe that houses of riot, profaneness, gambling, and debauchery, would continue to be such, if God's name were invoked in them, both morning and evening? Let those who have kept such houses, set up the practice of family prayer, and continue in it, and they will find a revolution in the manners of their domestics, as well as in themselves.

5. The duty of family prayer, may be argued from its tendency to propagate piety from one generation to another. We are justified in this conclusion from experience. We find many more instances of praying families where the heads had been trained up in houses of prayer, than among those who had been educated in a different manner. We also find many more pious persons descending from such families, than from those of the opposite character.

Sons of Belial have, indeed, been seen to arise out of religious families. It has been observed of such, that they are uncommonly abandoned to wickedness: This affords good evidence of the worth of the means which they had enjoyed. No one ever becomes very abandoned unless he abuses the

best means, or resisteth very clear light. This observation will be found to apply, with very few, if any exceptions, to the profligates who have been educated in a land of gospel light. We conclude from it that family prayer has a strong tendency to hand religion down to future generations; and that to be a member of such a family ought to be esteemed a high privilege. Would it be fair reasoning to conclude that there was no benefit to be derived from membership in Christ's family when he was on the earth, because there was a Judas among the twelve?

6. As we advance in the present subject, an allusion will next be made to a few scripture passages which imply the duty of family prayer.

A fair argument in support of the duty which we are now considering, may be drawn from the morning and evening sacrifices under the law. (Exodus xxx. 6, 7.) Aaron was directed to burn incense on an altar made for that purpose, every morning when he dressed the lamps, and when he lighted the lamps at evening. This was stiled a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout the generations of the children of Israel. That this kind of offering was to be accompanied with prayer, is plain from Luke i. where it is declared that while Zecharias was burning incense in the temple of the Lord, the whole multitude of the people were praying without.

There is great propriety in offering prayer to God in our families, morning and evening; because these introduce the two principal divisions of the day. When the day commences or opens with the morning light, it appears highly becoming, that we return thanks to God for our preserva-

tion during the hours of sleep and of darkness, and that we ask for the divine care, direction and support in the business, and amidst the temptations and dangers of the day. When the light disappears, it is equally proper, that we render thanks to our kind Benefactor for the mercies and deliverances experienced through the hours of labor and ease; and that we look up to him for his protection through the defenceless hours of slumber, as well as during our wakeful moments.

It has sometimes been asked why family prayer is not to be flatly performed three times in a day from the words of the Psalmist. Psalm lv. "Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice." To this it may be answered that it evidently appears, that the Psalmist refers to secret prayer in this place, and to no other kind; as will be plain to any one who examines the contents. It is also plain that the Psalmist uttered the resolution just mentioned in a time of trouble, when it is altogether suitable that the people of God should look to him by prayer continually. Daniel when the Jewish church was in captivity, prayed and gave thanks to God three times a day. (Dan. vi. 10.) Peter, amidst the labors and the dangers which he was called to perform and endure, retired for prayer about the middle of the day. (Acts x. 9.) It is said that the more devout among the Jews used to retire for prayer at noon, as well as in the morning and in the evening. The same practice is said to have been observed among the primitive Christians. But it does not appear that the divine law required it; or if we supposed that it did re-

quire it, the kind of prayer practised, morning, noon and night, was secret and not social prayer. Hence no argument can be drawn from it that family prayer is to be performed in a stated manner, except in the beginning and the close of the day.

The evidence in support of family prayer is increased when we attend to the commendation given by the Almighty to Abraham, the resolution of Joshua, and the practice of David. Jehovah testifieth concerning Abraham, "For I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 19.) Joshua resolveth, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua xxiv. 15.) When David attended on the joyful occasion of bringing the ark into his place, and after he had finished the offerings made at that time he "returned to bless his household." (2 Samuel vi. 20.)

From the divine attestation given to the renowned Patriarch, from the resolution of Joshua, and from the practice of David, we can incontestibly prove that family religion is sanctioned by the authority of God. Can we have any idea of social religion without social prayer? All will grant who profess to believe the bible, that social prayer belongs to public worship. How then is it possible to exclude social prayer from the family, when this last is only a smaller assembly than that which collects at the house of God?

But a greater than Abraham, Joshua and David is here. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hath ap-

peared in the flesh, and hath inculcated family prayer by his example. Often do we find him taking the particular disciples who composed his immediate family, aside from the multitude, and praying with them.—The

7th, and last argument which I shall adduce in support of the duty which has been urged, shall be taken from the passage recorded in Jeremiah x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name." Those families cannot be considered as calling upon God who do not pray to him in a social manner. We read their doom. The wrath of God will be poured out upon them. If they remain in their prayerless state, it may be expected that they will, if they do not already, hold all serious religion in open contempt, and that they will go from bad to worse until it shall be awfully verified in their punishment that the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked.

Having attempted, in a brief and plain manner, to show that family prayer is a reasonable and scriptural duty of great importance, I proceed,

II. To consider some of the objections which have been brought against it.

OBJECTION I.

"I don't think it to be worth while to attend to family prayer, for it is an old custom handed down by tradition."

In reply, I would observe, that family prayer is an old custom. It is coeval with the existence of godly families. But what objection can lie against the practice from its great antiquity? Is it a bad or a foolish custom because it is an old one? Will you who

make this objection, consider the antiquity of any practice as a sufficient reason for rejecting it, unless in religious concerns? The use of money in commerce is very ancient. We find it as far back as the time of Abraham. Will you refuse to receive money for the property which you sell, because it is an old custom? Will you neglect to till your ground, or to plow and sow, because it is an old custom?

The other part of the objection is, that family prayer is "handed down by tradition." The word tradition is used in a good as well as in a bad sense in the bible. That it is often used in a bad sense, no one will deny who is much acquainted with the inspired writings, Paul exhorteth the church in Thessalonica as follows: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." (2 Thess. ii. 15.) Here the word *traditions* is used in a good sense. In order to determine whether any thing which is a matter of *tradition*, be good or bad, we must determine from whom it cometh. If it is of human origin, it has no claim to bind the conscience, but if it cometh from God, it is obligatory upon us. I trust that it has been made to appear that family prayer is of God, and that therefore it is handed down to us from him. Let not the objector, therefore attempt to shield himself in his neglect, by urging that family prayer is an old custom handed down by tradition.

OBJECTION II.

"Some pray in their families who practise evil in their lives, and therefore have no proper sense of the duty which they profess to perform."

Reply. There is no one, whether he pray or not, who does not practise evil. There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not. When we charge our neighbor with having no proper sense of what he is doing while in family prayer, we ought to be cautious lest we be guilty of the rash judging which is condemned in the scriptures. A disposition to suspect the sincerity of every one we meet, does not discover a good temper in us.

But let us suppose the worst which the objector can intend—which is, That some praying heads of families are false to their engagements, and fraudulent in their dealings. What relief can you prayerless heads of families find here? It is a melancholy fact that the best things in life have been perverted to bad purposes by wicked men. What does this prove? Not the badness of *the thing* perverted, but the badness of *the man* who is guilty of such abuse. Should your hypocritical neighbor go on to hell after all his seeming devotion, what relief will this afford you, when you must give account of yourself to God? Will you dare plead then the hypocrisy of others, to save you from the condemnation of the prayerless? Remember that each one is to be judged in the next world according to his own character, and not according to the character of another.

OBJECTION III.

“Most around me neglect family prayer; I cannot therefore endure the singularity or the scoffs with which I shall be viewed and treated, if I set up the practice.”

Is it indeed so, that irreligion generally prevails in your neighborhood? Make an effort to stem the torrent of iniquity. Distinguish

yourselves as Noah did in the old world, and as Lot did in Sodom. You may be instrumental of reforming others by your example. A few religious families generally strike a damp upon the loose who are near them, and check them in their career.

But if you should meet with reproaches and sufferings for righteousness' sake, you will have the approbation of your own consciences, and what is infinitely greater, the approbation of God. If you are called to be singular in the ways of piety, and if you meet with scoffers every day, the period will soon come when you shall receive a glorious reward in heaven, and when hypocrites, unbelievers, mockers, and cavillers of every kind, will be filled with shame, and held up as objects of everlasting contempt.

OBJECTION IV.

“I am so diffident that I cannot lead in family prayer.”

The diffidence of which you complain is a difficulty which most labor under, in their first entrance on this duty. If you labor to overcome it, you will find it to decrease. It will diminish by a continued course of praying. Endeavor to set the fear of God before your eyes; which can carry you above the slavish fear of man. Be fervent in your supplications to Him who helpeth our infirmities, and you will rise above overwhelming discouragements in addressing the throne of grace.

OBJECTION V.

“I have no gift in prayer, and therefore must be excused from leading in family devotion.”

Reply. Placed as you are at the head of a family, be suitably affected with the thought of neglecting to seek God with your household. Consider also that

prayer is not acceptable from the terms in which it is clothed, but from the temper of the heart which the suppliant possesses. Further, you may be able to pray in a manner which is for the edification of your domestics, though you are not for the edification of a large assembly. I do not believe that the objection arising from a want of gifts, ever prevented the head of a family from maintaining social prayer in his house, when he was really roused to a sense of his duty.

It is granted that all good men are not equally gifted in prayer. But those of the smallest gifts may perform to the edification of their families, by treasuring up in their minds the prayers uttered in the scriptures. I know that some persons are offended with a proposal of any kind which countenances a form of prayer. But their objection is groundless. If they object against confining public bodies to a set form of words, prescribed by the authority of the church, they, in that case, stand on good ground. But the case before us is of a different nature. This only respects the case of an individual who is deficient in the gift of prayer, and is laboring to remedy his deficiency by laying up in his mind the adorations, confessions, petitions, thanksgivings, &c. recorded in the book of God.

A man may use the same words in his prayer continually, and yet pray with the spirit. He may vary his language in every prayer, and yet may not be acceptable to God. Our Saviour did not direct his disciples to lifeless prayers, and yet he gave to them a form of prayer, or a summary of the petitions which they were daily to offer up to their heavenly Father. Jesus Christ, when in his agony

in the garden, repeated a former prayer in the same words. We know that he was heard; and therefore may conclude that a mere man may be acceptable to God, though he be confined in his devotions to a form of words.

The objection against family prayer from a want of gifts, it appears, is not insurmountable; and it is hoped that no one will dwell upon it, so as to prevent his compliance, with a reasonable, scriptural and important duty.

OBJECTION VI.

“ I am an impenitent sinner—The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: I cannot therefore in conscience pray to God by myself; far less can I consent to lead in the devotions of others, as in family prayer.”

I suppose, my friend, that you feel yourself to be strongly fortified by an objection which is in the mouths of many at the present time. I shall not be able to drive you from your imaginary strong hold, unless God by his spirit speak to your heart.—I request you to consider the following things,

1. If the plea of impenitence will avail to excuse you from prayer, it will excuse you from the performance of every other duty; and should you remain impenitent to the day of your death, you will be found without guilt. Your plea for the neglect of prayer proceeds on the ground that you do not think yourself to deserve punishment. What an awful state are you in, while contending with God?—The consideration that you are an impenitent sinner, furnishes a strong argument for seeking God by humble prayer, as well as in the use of other means, that you may obtain mercy.

2. You act inconsistently with yourself. You restrain prayer before God, because you are an impenitent sinner. Why do you not stop plowing? The plowing of the wicked is sin. Why do you eat and drink, since you are commanded to do these, and whatever you do, to the glory of God? If you do not perform the common offices of life out of a supreme regard to the divine glory, you sin in the performance of them. Why are you so much afraid of sinning against God in prayer, while you have no fear of it in so many other things, in which you are equally commanded to seek his glory? Would you, if your house was on fire neglect to extinguish the flame because that you are an impenitent sinner? Oh! be assured that you are travelling in a crooked path, and that a deceived heart has turned you aside. While you are, every moment, in danger of hell-fire, you flatter yourselves that you must not pray to God for escape; and that any thing is a duty rather than attention to the concerns of your soul.

3. You have not that reverence for God which you may suppose you have, while you urge a scruple of conscience against praying to him. If you had a true reverence for God, how could you presume to use the gifts of providence without asking his leave? You do use them in this manner, while you neglect to pray to God. You neither acknowledge his hand in any thing, nor ask of him a blessing, nor his leave to use any thing in your prayerless state. Does such conduct as this evidence a reverential fear of the Most High? Are you impelled to such behavior by a tender conscience?

Suppose a neighbor of yours

comes to your granary before your eyes, and takes from it bread-corn for himself and family, and should reply to your expostulation, "I can't in conscience ask you for it, but the grain I must have;" would you think that he conducts as he does from a scrupulous regard to your character? Or, suppose he takes your horse and rides to a distant town, and pleads, when you call him to an account, that he could not in conscience ask you for the loan of your beast, would you not either think him to be a deranged man; or under the influence of a very corrupt disposition? Now apply the case of your neighbor to yourself. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. The beasts of the field and of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his. They are his in the strictest sense; as he is their Creator, and constant preserver. He openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Creatures cannot be *yours* only in a very limited sense; but they are the Lord's in the highest sense possible. You are daily using some or other of the creatures of God, for your subsistence and comfort; and are, as a prayerless man, neither asking his leave to use them, nor his blessing in the use. How is it that if your conscience be so tender that you cannot ask leave to take the blessings of providence for your use, that your conscience will so quickly permit you to lay your hands upon them without paying any acknowledgment to their divine author? How does it happen that conscience is so tender in the one case, and so unfeeling in the other? We should certainly think that a man who scrupled to ask another for a fa-

vor, would equally scruple to take for his use what he wished for, without asking leave. How astonishing is the blindness of man in the concerns of religion?

4. Prayer, whether of the secret or social kind, is not, like some other duties, limited to qualified subjects; but the performance of it is enjoined upon all men without delay. A person cannot be admitted to the Lord's Supper, according to divine rule, unless some character be formed in him which constitutes his next or immediate right. He is, for instance, to have knowledge to discern the Lord's Body, and is to examine himself as to his motives, before he comes to the communion table. But prayer does not suppose a good character previously formed, any more than reading the Bible, and an attendance on public worship. The impenitent sinner therefore, may be called upon to pray as his next duty, be his present character what it may.

Should you feel alarmed, as many impenitent sinners have done, your scruples of conscience would instantly vanish. You would, while you realized that you sinned in every thing, be engaged in prayer, both in your closet and family. Rest not upon an excuse which will, sooner or later, give you unspeakable pain. Act the rational part of those who daily call upon God.

Impartially and seriously review the remarks which have now been offered to convince you of your duty, and to remove your objections. May you be excited to the practice of family devotion, by arguments drawn from family sorrows and joys, from its benevolent tendency towards your domesticities, in encouraging piety,

and discountenancing wickedness—from its tendency to hand religion down to the succeeding generations, from facts recorded in scripture relative to the conduct of men highly approved of God, and from the example of Christ in particular, in praying with his family. To these, add the dreadful state of families which continue prayerless thro' life. Upon them the Lord will pour out his fury, and cause them to feel the bitter fruits of their wickedness.

The objections which have been brought against this duty can have no weight with a serious mind. Heads of families will not, if they act rationally, be deterred from the duty, because it is an old custom handed down by tradition—because some who pray in their houses appear to have no proper sense of what they are doing—because many live in the neglect of the duty—because they are diffident in their make; and because they have not the best gifts, and are destitute of grace in their hearts. These objections, with all others which may be brought, will vanish like the shades of night before the approach of the morning sun, when God shall set your sins in order before your eyes.

You stand, my friends, in an important relation to posterity. It will be remembered of you while your name is preserved among the living, whether your house was a Bethel, a house of God, or a house of Belial. Which of these reputations do you wish to leave among the living?

Suppose a son of yours, settled in family state, should be seized with dangerous sickness, his fears of future misery should be alarmed, and he should thus address you: "My father, I lived with you from infancy to manhood;

but I never heard a prayer from your lips. I felt encouraged by your example to set out in the world without prayer. I have been setting the same example before my little ones which you did before yours. But now I tremble at the consequences. Permit me, my dear parent, to speak plainly—I greatly fear that you and I have the blood of souls to answer for by our neglect. Oh, let us repent and reform without delay, and seek a pardoning God for mercy.”

Would not such an address cut to the heart the prayerless Father, who is not dead to all tender feelings? Avoid all occasions hereafter, I entreat you, of laying yourselves open to such reproofs from the lips of a dying child. Begin family prayer without delay. If you neglect this duty any longer, Satan will take advantage from it, and will by himself and his emissaries, labor to prevent the performance of it in any future period of your life. Look to God for help. Confess to your domestics your sin in living without prayer heretofore, and tell them, that you are resolved by divine grace to reform. Be engaged in the duty, which has been urged, and you will find that ten thousand difficulties will vanish. Take unto yourselves the whole armor of God. Pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.

Let those who maintain family prayer, be encouraged to continue in the practice, with as few interruptions as possible. In your devotion guard against all ostentation on the one hand, and against cold formality on the other. Let your morning and evening sacrifices be performed in a manner which shall

best tend to impress your own hearts and the hearts of your domestics. Instruct your households in the doctrines and duties of revealed religion, while you are praying with them from day to day. Enforce your endeavors by a holy example.—Remember that without faith it is impossible to please God. You must have the power as well as the form of godliness, or you will perish, after all your exertions to maintain order in your houses. Adopt the resolution of David, (Psal. ci.) “I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto thee O Lord will I sing. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. Oh when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” May you have such members of your households, as that you may be enabled to enjoy a little resemblance of the family in heaven, while you are pilgrims and strangers on the earth; and may all those blessings come upon you, which are promised to the habitation of the just!

QUESTION. Do saints ever lose any degree of grace, or sanctification? Or, Is grace in saints ever diminished, so that a less quantity is now possessed, than at a preceding period?

THIS being among the doubtful subjects, it does not become us to decide positively upon it; yet evidence, perhaps satisfactory, may be produced that saints never lose any, not the least degree, of that sanctification which they have attained. This is a subject on which revelation only is to be consulted, and the evidence from revelation is to be obtained from two sources.

1. Positive assurances or declarations, that holiness in saints shall be progressive. It is said, Job. xvii. 9. *The righteous shall hold on his way.* This is equal to a positive declaration or an absolute promise, that the righteous shall maintain his degree of grace, or the progress he hath made in the way of holiness or life. If he doth not this, if the quantity or degree of grace in him be diminished, at that time, he doth *not hold on his way*; but reclines, and his movement is retrograde, rather than progressive. It is added, and he that hath clean hands shall *wax stronger and stronger.* This also asserts an increasing or constant improving, which is inconsistent with a declining state. It is said, Psa. lxxxiv. 7. *They go from strength to strength.* If this relates primarily to saints, equally with the other, it asserts that progressive improvement of grace with which the diminution of it at any time is incompatible.—If it described the collection of the tribes of Israel from their respective residences, to solemnize the feasts of the Lord, or of individuals, to attend his worship in Jerusalem, and this were typical of the collection of the numerous communities, or individuals of his people, from the four winds of heaven, in his holy hill of Zion—it teaches, that saints in their pilgrimages are continually progressing toward that better country, as the tribes of Israel progressed in their journey to Jerusalem.—It is said, Isa. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint:* All which expressions imply that constant progress in holiness with which the diminution of sanctification, in any de-

gree, is totally inconsistent. Let us now consider the other source of instruction,

2. That of comparison or similitude.—As the similitudes which represent the nature and state of grace are numerous as well as various, let it suffice only to refer to them, or produce the scriptures which contain them. The parables of the mustard seed, and leaven cast into meal, are probably designed to represent the nature of grace in the hearts of saints, equally with the progress of Christ's kingdom in the world. In Prov. iv. 16. grace is compared to a shining light which shines *more and more* until the perfect day.—Isa. xlv. 4. *They shall spring up as willows by their water courses.* Psa. i. 1—3. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly—his leaf also *shall not wither.* Mal. iv. *You that fear my name—shall grow up as calves for the stall.* John iv. 14. *The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life.* 2 Cor. iii. 18. *But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.* Grace in saints is compared to an infant or child. 1 Pet. ii. 2. *As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* 1 Cor. xiii. 11. *When I was a child, I understood as a child—but when I became a man I put away childish things.*—Eph. iv. 11. *And he gave some apostles—for the perfecting of the saints—till we all come in the unity of the faith, unto a perfect man—that we be no more children, but speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ.*—If it be said, As plants wither by drought, and

children are diminished by sickness in size and strength, so grace in saints may be diminished by temptations and lusts, the distempers of the soul; to complete the objection it may be added, and the reasoning is equally conclusive, as children, by sickness, decay and die, so grace in saints may decline and become extinct: and is not the argument from the similitude as direct and decisive for the total extinction, as for the diminution of grace?—But ought not a conviction of the constantly improving nature of grace to be produced in our minds by assurances so positive and similitudes so direct and instructive, though no satisfactory solution of apparent objections could be produced? One general observation supported by divine testimony will obviate all the particular cases which may be offered under the present objection, viz. that the gracious constitution which God has established with his people, proceeds in a manner or order, directly the reverse of the constitution of nature. As it is presumed this proposition will be illustrated by the subsequent remarks, no particular proof of it will be produced. If God has established such a gracious constitution, though children decay, by sickness, in size and strength; temptations and lusts, the infirmities of the soul, tend to the improvement of grace.—It may be observed in this place, though it be a partial digression, that symptoms or expressions of weakness, through diminution of natural strength or mental vigor by the power of sickness, or the infirmities of age, are no real evidence of the decay of grace. As grace does not change the constitution, nor state of the body, nor the faculties of the mind, and these are

the organs by which grace is exhibited, as these are feeble or vigorous, such *may* be the manifestation which grace makes of itself. Happily however we are furnished with many pleasing instances in which grace manifests itself with uncommon lustre amidst great bodily weakness and all the infirmities of age, as so many illustrations and confirmations of divine truth and fidelity. *In old age they shall be fat and flourishing, to shew that the Lord is upright and there is no unrighteousness in him.*

The holy scriptures assure us, that spiritual improvement is the immediate end of those chastisements, of which inward trials are a very important part, which saints experience in this life. Our natural parents correct us for their pleasure, but their heavenly Father chastens them for their profit, *that they may be partakers of his holiness.* And their afflictions, inward as well as outward, yield in them the peaceable fruits of righteousness. They produce this happy effect by exhibiting the vanity of earthly objects and disappointing their expectations from them, mortifying their sensual and sinful desires and appetites, subduing their obstinate and refractory tempers, and reducing their wills to a quiet and cheerful submission to the will of their heavenly Father, and so *they learn obedience by the things they suffer*:—and by drawing the curtain of time and disclosing invisible subjects more affectingly, impressing them more feelingly, and exhibiting the glory to be revealed more attractively, they excite spiritual affections more ardently; and thus amidst temptations without, and trials within, though their outward man perish, yet is their inward man *renewed day by day*; while they look at things which

are not seen and are eternal.—But especially two objections against this sentiment ought to be considered and obviated.

I. That the cautions and exhortations addressed to saints imply at least a possibility of declining in grace. *See that ye lose not the things which ye have attained, &c.* To which it may be replied,

1. That such cautions equally imply a possibility of falling from grace totally and finally; and if they are not a conclusive evidence for the total extinction, neither are they for the diminution of grace.—But it is especially to be observed,

2. That saints are preserved and improve in a gracious state by the cautions and exhortations of scripture as a necessary and useful mean for the purpose. It is indeed the only way in which they can be preserved *as saints*, or in an holy manner, as they exhibit the arguments and motives which excite that voluntary exertion, or those virtuous exercises in which holiness radically consists. If we should suppose that saints were supported in a gracious state without cautions and encouragements, there would be no more holiness in it, than in the preservation of the earth or sea; as it would be an effect of mere divine power, without any intellectual, moral exercise whatever. But the address of such motives, of evil to be avoided, and of good to be attained, exhibit objects and furnish opportunity for voluntary exercises, and continually stimulate to holy exertions: the fear of experiencing the fatal effects of declension or apostacy, and the hope of obtaining the blessed reward of progressive persevering grace, exciting the exercise of holy vigilance and

assiduity in walking the way of life.—We may now consider the other objection,

II. The experience of the godly.—They find their state extremely various. At times possessed of those views of divine objects which elevate their minds and fill them with holy wonder and joy—from which they decline and descend till they become spectacles of emptiness, guilt and unworthiness, a terror to themselves, and are conscious of those horrid atheistical thoughts, impure imaginations and acts of wickedness which produce serious doubts and inquiries, not so much whether they have declined in grace, as whether they ever had any grace at all—and can it be supposed, that they now possess as great a degree of grace as when in a sublime and elevated frame? To this it may be replied,

1. That many of the blasphemous and atheistical thoughts which saints experience, are not the effects of corruption; but Satanic injections, the fiery darts of their spiritual enemies.—Their impure imaginations, the acts of wickedness of which they are conscious, may not be the effects of a decline in grace and the increase of corruption, but the fruit of that corruption which previously existed, drawn into exercise by the exhibition of an enticing object. Even these *indirectly* promote their growth in grace, by disclosing the fountain of wickedness in their hearts, giving occasion for the renewed exercise of repentance and humility, riveting those tempers more deeply in them, teaching them more effectually their entire dependence upon the grace of God to preserve them from sinning and falling—the worth of pardoning mercy, and, remember-

ing the wormwood and the gall, inculcating lessons of diffidence, circumspection and prayerfulness, which have an habitual influence over them all their days.—Not only hath most important and useful instruction been derived to the people of God, and essential benefit arisen to individuals, by the terrible falls of David, Solomon and Peter, but from these falls the overruling wisdom and grace of God took occasion to make them more excellent saints on earth, and more happy in heaven than they would have been, if they had never fallen victims to temptation.—If any from this say, Let us sin that grace may abound, and do evil that good may come, it is sufficient, as a preservative from such an abuse of the truth, to suggest the observation of the Apostle, *the damnation of such is just.*

2. The feelings of saints are not the test by which their state, or degree of grace is to be resolved. If they feel at some times more empty and vile, than at others, it is no certain evidence, nor real symptom of the decay, or diminution of grace in them. These mortifying scenes may really be high exercises of grace; not towards its direct and proper objects, God, or Christ, or heaven; but indirectly towards themselves, in repentance, self abhorrence and abasement of soul before God; when they will, they must be empty, vile and devoid of grace, in their own esteem.

3. These scenes of humiliation are really necessary and highly useful. Were the gracious at all times to be supported in an elevated frame, they would continue to be like new converts, like the Israelites at the Red Sea, in a glow of affection, but extremely

ignorant of the artifices of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, of the blindness, pride, obstinacy and rebellion of their hearts; would possess much greater degrees of self sufficiency and vain confidence, more forward and zealous like Peter, more exposed to the influence of temptation, and to dishonor God and religion through it.—But whom the Lord loves he chastens, as well by spiritual desertions and inward conflicts, as by outward trials and afflictions—and the direct exercises of grace must be suspended—they must descend into the dark caverns, and be conducted through the various apartments of a corrupt and depraved heart, and inspect the wicked and foul spirits which inhabit them, for their humiliation and abhorrence; to bring them to loathe themselves for their manifold abominations, mortify their pride and independent spirit, and compel them to confide alone in God and grace. These humiliating scenes purify and refine them. By these grace takes root downward and bears fruit upward, in the greater purity and fervor of their holy affections, and the refinement of their joy and comfort, those peaceable fruits of righteousness which proceed from them.

PEREGRINUS.

On want of conformity to the will of God.

Messrs. EDITORS,

AS your useful Magazine is very popular, it is read by many of a certain description of people, who have not as yet been particularly addressed. The following thoughts are submitted for their benefit.

THERE are many people, of sober manners, and decent

lives and conversation, regular on the sabbath, and constant at the sanctuary, that are conscious to themselves, that they are not united to Christ by saving faith, or conformed to God by spiritual obedience. It is common for such people to think too well of themselves. They too generally conceive, that they are not exceedingly vile at heart, nor worthy of enduring the wrath of God forever. There is indeed a difference between them, and the openly immoral and profane, but it is important that they should know their own characters, and be convinced that a God of infinite purity cannot look upon them but with abhorrence. Let us examine whether it be not great wickedness to live without obedience to the holy law of God, and without faith in Jesus Christ, and whether such a course does not render men deserving of the wrath of God, however decent they may be, in their outward deportment.

Let us first consider in what manner the Most High regards the want of obedience and faith: He has fully taught us this in his word. By far the most numerous complaints and charges, which he mentions against mankind, are the want of obedience, faith, submission and holiness. One of the most terrible threatnings to be found in the new testament, is grounded, not upon gross and notorious immoralities, but upon not knowing God, and not obeying the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." When a man who depends merely on a decent exte-

rior reads of Christ's coming in such vengeance, he is ready to conclude that it is to punish a Cain, that murdered his brother, a Manasseh, that filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, or a Judas; and is surprised to find that this is a representation of what will be inflicted upon such as merely know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we turn back to the old testament, we shall find in the first chapter of the proverbs, a threatening equally dreadful against men of the same character. *Because I have called, and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: which is true even of the most decent unbelievers: I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh: When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not hear: they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.* Unbelievers, who think the best of themselves, are guilty of all the neglect, disregard and want of obedience to God, on account of which, these awful curses are denounced.

It is the general tenor of the scriptures, to reprove men for not obeying the voice of the Lord, for unbelief, which is not believing on Christ, for unrighteousness, which is the want of righteousness, for iniquity, which is the want of equity, for unfaithfulness, and in

a word, for the want of those things, which God requires of his people. Jesus has said, He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. The crime on account of which the Israelites were condemned to perish in the wilderness, was their not believing and not obeying the Lord. The Jews were broken from their own olive by unbelief. The wicked are destroyed for the same crime. He that believeth not shall be damned. Sin consists not only in the transgression of the prohibitions of the divine law, but also in want of conformity to it. To such as neglect duty the Lord will say, Thou wicked and slothful servant, and of such, cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Besides: our Lord in the representation he has given us of the decisions at the day of general judgment, has told us that judgment will be given against those on the left, because they neglected to give him meat and drink and clothing and hospitable lodging, and to visit him in sickness and prison. It is on this ground that he will declare them accursed, and sentence them to depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. By these considerations it is evident, that we have to deal with one, who considers inattention to him, and to his gospel, exceedingly criminal, and deserving of his wrath, and will punish it with everlasting destruction.

That the wickedness of neglecting our duty may appear in its true light, let it be illustrated by the following similitude. Suppose a father, at the head of a numerous family; several of his children utterly neglect to do any

thing he commands them, or to regard his counsels and admonitions. He calls but they do not answer, he stretches out his hand but they do not regard, he bids one do this, and another that, but every one is too busy in his own diversions, to pay any attention to his authority or interests. Would a parent in these circumstances receive it as a sufficient excuse, if they should plead thus, Father, we have done no mischief, we have not beat you, nor called you ill names, nor killed your cattle, nor said a word to persuade the other children to do evil; you cannot pretend to blame us for any thing but negligence, and surely so long as we have done no mischief, mere negligence can be but a venial fault, and ought not to be noticed? Would he not reply and tell them, that they were in rebellion, dishonoring him with their contempt, ruining the family, and themselves? And should we not justify the father in disinheriting them forever?

Or if, instead of a father, we suppose the commander of an army, and his troops persisted in paying no attention to his directions, would not such an army be overcome by a very despicable force? And does not this show, that want of conformity to the will of God is a fearful crime?

Besides: If we should candidly contemplate the law of God, which requires us to love him with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves, we must be convinced of its reasonableness, and importance in itself, and that neglecting this principle of impartial love, tends to the subversion of general happiness, and must be viewed as a crime.

So also neglecting to believe on Jesus Christ, is very ungrateful to him, who laid down his life for

sinners ; and tends to overthrow all the benefits and glory of his death. Such omissions are a direct opposition to all the claims of God, and are at variance with his whole government of the world. It is therefore manifest, that God will be glorious in taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

How deluded then are those who regard the neglect of God and of duty, as a venial sin ! How stupid and hardened ! They have little or no sense of duty and obligation, or of the wretched depravity of their own hearts. This ignorance, or rather insensibility of guilt, is a bar against repentance, faith, and a reconciliation to God, according to the proposal of the gospel. While it continues, how can the sinner see the plague of his own heart—feel the necessity of being born again—realize his need of a divine Saviour, and an infinite atonement ? or how can he consistently believe the doctrines of the bible ? Certainly those who see no evil worthy of divine wrath, in wholly casting off God, are exposed to fall into almost any delusion.

Having thought on the evil of not conforming to the will of God, let the reader seriously reflect on the life he has led, and the importance of turning to the Lord with his whole heart, agreeably to the direction, ‘ My son, give me thine heart.’

S— R-@-Q.

A Narrative of a work of divine grace in Killingworth, second society, which began in the year 1801.

AMONG the numerous instances in which the Great

Head of the Church hath of late manifested his power and grace in the revival of religion, his favors to this church and people, I think, cannot with propriety be accounted the least, as will appear from the following incontestible facts.

The peculiar difficulties which subsisted among this people, rendered it very improbable that there should take place so glorious a work of the Spirit of God. But we are assured from his holy word, and it was here exemplified, that “ God seeth not as man seeth, neither are his ways as our ways. He preserveth the souls of his saints, he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked ; and unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness.”

In the latter part of the month of April, a number of the young people requested that a sermon might be preached to them, upon election day, which they had formerly observed as a day of feasting and merriment. The proposal, at first, was made to me by two or three only, and I declined it, thinking it inexpedient upon that day, when there seemed to be no special reason for it. As yet, I had no knowledge of any uncommon seriousness beginning in the place, neither was any suggested by them of the kind. But the solicitation being renewed, and by a large number, I consented to preach, though upon a different day. Still ignorant of their design, I endeavored to adapt the sermon to their age and condition in life, hoping it might be useful. There was a full assembly of old, as well as young, and solemn attention. At this time the spirit of the Lord was secretly working in them, tho’ there was nothing further said, until the evening of

the 10th of May following, when about fifty persons desired a conference, that evening, or a discourse upon the subject of religion. At seeing such a number collected, inquiring for the crucified Jesus, I was so struck with the solemn appearance, that for a few moments I was at a loss what was wisest to be done. After serious reflection, and hoping God would give me assistance, I concluded to address them, on these words: "Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." They seemed to be much moved and comforted by the subject.

Perceiving that the spirit of the Lord was in very deed in this place, and in a peculiar manner shedding its benign influence on the sinful children of men, it was deemed expedient to appoint weekly conferences, for the encouragement of such a work, which began in the manner above mentioned, and have been constantly and punctually attended, to the present time.

The conferences, at first, were looked upon by some in a very unfavorable point of light, and supposed to be party meetings, instituted to divide the society still more and more; and those who were known to be under convictions of sin, were supposed to be falling into a kind of delirium. Notwithstanding, the work was gradually carried on till there was a fuller display of God's sovereignty and grace, upon the 9th and 10th of August, at which time I was about to leave the society, for several months, at least, if not finally, to fulfil a previous engagement. It appeared expedient therefore to invite those who were under serious impressions, to

meet at my lodgings for Christian conversation. Accordingly upon the Sabbath, I informed the congregation, that there would be such a meeting at two o'clock the next day. In the evening about forty came in, for religious instruction, and on the next day the house was filled, generally, thro' the day, especially in the afternoon. More than 200 were present, anxious about their salvation, till some time in the evening, when they reluctantly retired. At this time about 60 were found deeply affected with the plague of their own hearts, and the others seriously alarmed, according to the words of the Prophet, "Sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrite."

Several having passed the night in sorrow, came again very early in the morning, much affected at the recollection of their past offences, crying, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Under these affecting circumstances, I was called to leave this distressed people. They were much affected at the thought of being destitute of a preached gospel, as it seemed they must be, at such a time as this. They had no where to go but unto God, to whom they ought to have repaired before; but depending too much on human aid, they were at last left to feel their absolute dependence upon the great Proprietor of all, and nothing remained for them to do, but to repent and believe. Under their distress of soul they cried for mercy, and, shortly after, numbers rejoiced in hope.

In the months of September, October, November and December, 32 hopeful converts were added to the church. After this I returned and ministered to the people here again, and the 21st of

April following, I took the pastoral charge of this church. Soon after, we were exercised with sickness to a very great degree, (rising of six hundred were subjects of the disease in this society) so that it seemed to stay the glorious work for a time, by calling the people more immediately to the care of the body. This year, which was 1802, 17 only were visibly brought into Christ's kingdom, by a profession of Christianity. The year following, 1803, the attention of both old and young seemed to be unusually excited again, and 33 were added to our communion. Since the beginning of the present year, 9 have been admitted, making in the whole 91; 46 males, and 45 females. They are of different ages, from nearly 70 down to 18, tho' the greatest part are youths and middle aged people. A number more entertain comfortable hopes since the late revival, and are counting the cost, before they enter the church, and it is to be hoped they will soon publicly profess the religion of Jesus.

Many lost their former hope, and were led to build again, on another foundation, which is, Christ formed in the soul the hope of glory. They assert, that the doctrines of total depravity, God's sovereignty, decrees, election, &c. were things too grievous to be borne by them, until they were enlightened from on high. Even their articles of faith used in the church were expressed in this manner, "You believe that mankind are by nature in a state of spiritual weakness." Altho' the close doctrines of the gospel were not absolutely denied, yet they were ranked among the secrets of the Almighty, and supposed to be so mysterious, that it was an act

of prudence, and a display of superior wisdom, at least, to pass them by. Thus many went on sleeping and slumbering, until it appeared, that the Lord was present, as in Jerusalem, searching it with candles and punishing the men that were settled on their lees.

Oh, blessed be God! that the solemn, pungent truths which were once so unpleasant to their depraved tastes, are now become the meat and life of the renewed souls.

The animosities which were in the church, so far as the spirit of God hath touched the hearts of its members, have entirely ceased; so that they once more enjoy sweet communion together. Whatever may be the private feelings of individuals, it is but an act of justice to them and to all, to say, their deportment, in general, both in the church and society, is decent and becoming,—all peaceably assembling together, on the Sabbath, and other occasions for religious worship, praising the God of their fathers.

JOSIAH B. ANDREWS.

Killingworth, March 24th,

A. D. 1804.

(To be continued.)

As different explanations of difficult passages of Scripture may ultimately tend to produce light, the Editors think it proper to insert the following.

FOR THE CONNECTICUT EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

An Explanation of Rom. ix. 3.

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

CHRISTIANS have found great difficulty in under-

standing this passage. Some have supposed, that St. Paul was willing to be forever cast off from Christ, if he could by that means save his brethren. This is the most natural interpretation of the verse, as it stands in our translation. But they have found great difficulty in imitating this fervent love of the Apostle. And because they could not bring themselves to a willingness to be forever accursed from Christ, and to endure endless punishment, amidst the blasphemies of damned spirits, in order to save their brethren, they have been ready to condemn themselves, for want of zeal in religion, and of love to the souls of men.

Others have been displeased with this interpretation, supposing it inconsistent with love towards Christ, to wish to be accursed from him, and have put various, forced constructions upon the passage to avoid this inconsistency.

I will offer one, which I think obviates both these difficulties and makes the meaning of the verse evident. The word which is rendered *could wish*, is not optative but indicative, and should be rendered *wished*. The expression is emphatical, and is not merely *I wished*, but *I myself wished*, &c. The first part of the verse should be translated thus; *For I myself wished to be accursed from Christ*, and should be read in a parenthesis. This construction makes the verse, taken in connection with the other verses, plain and beautiful. It stands thus; "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, (my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost,) that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, (*for I myself wished to be accursed from Christ*) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Paul spoke from his own experience. Before his conversion, while he was "breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he *wished to be accursed from Christ*, to be anathema. He saw many of his brethren running the same mad career, obstinately refusing the offers of salvation, and "wishing to be accursed from Christ." He knew by experience the misery of such a condition, and his most tender compassion was excited for them.

Are not many of *our* brethren, our kinsmen according to the flesh, in the same miserable condition with these Jews? Let us then imitate this great Apostle, in exercising great heaviness and continual sorrow for them, and endeavor by all means to bring them to salvation.

MINOR.

The purity of God's word the cause of love to it.

IN the experience of David, the man after God's own heart, much of the nature, pleasure and excellence of true devotion is found. His psalms, particularly the cxixth, are ample testimonies of this truth. In the 140th verse, he expresses his feelings respecting the word of God. *Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.*

The instruction to be drawn from these words is this: The true servants of God love his word, on account of its very great purity.—This is a mark of a real disciple of Christ, and is worthy of solemn attention.

Love is a combination of esteem, friendship, good will and delight. It is an union of soul with the object.—Hence the love

of Christians to the divine word includes,

Great esteem and respect for it. The disciples of Socrates, Plato and others, profess great esteem for their writings. They find in them something which they value exceedingly; and they can scarcely cease to express their very great veneration and regard.—The true Christian finds a correspondent feeling in his bosom towards the word. Its enemies may call it “vain babbling,” “a book of fables and lies;” but real Christians view it as a most precious volume—a light that shineth in a dark place. They are willing to hide it in their hearts; it is more precious than all treasures.—David expresses his feelings very devoutly in this psalm. Under the titles of law, precepts, statutes, testimonies, commandments and judgments, almost every verse in this long psalm is filled with the praise and esteem of the word. He had such an estimation of it as that he could sincerely say, *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

Whatever appears great or good in the vast expanse of the created heavens, falls short of the glories of the word. It is a fountain of life. The excellency of its precepts, the wonders of its discoveries, and the purity of its nature, bear away the admiration of the whole soul. Nothing in the whole circle of created beauties so greatly engages the esteem as the word. Eloquence may charm, the arts and sciences exhibit their attractions, while the stupendous discoveries of astronomy astonish; but the Christian finds the word more sublime and wonderful than all of them. Here he meets an object suited to his soul; the best remedy against sin—the sweetest cordial in adversity—the only sure

guide through death to immortal happiness—the only sure fountain of hope—the key of knowledge, and the settled counsel of the King of Heaven. Does he need instruction? there it is found. Does he need comfort? there is a full supply. Does he wish for objects of contemplation, boundless as his own immortal desires? there they are presented in thick and pleasing profusion. There he discovers the glorious method of pardoning sin, of regenerating and sanctifying the depraved heart, and there the best examples of what is noble and great.—While the sinful and careless mind reads it as a dry, antiquated book, destitute of all entertainment, and calculated rather to make him doze than read with pleasure,—the Christian finds in it something more engaging than all riches, or all the scenes which delight the senses. He values it as his chief joy; nor would he quit it, as Dr. Watts says, “For loads of silver well refined, or heaps of choicest gold.” In every point of view ’tis precious to him beyond compare. It smoothes the path of life, removes the horrors of the grave, and brings to light life and immortality.—These are his genuine feelings: but it is impossible to express his full esteem—unless we should describe his daily meditations and all the affections of his soul.

From this emotion of love arises, as from its natural source, *Conformity to all that the word requires.* Compliance, both in practice and affection, necessarily follows this high esteem of God’s word.—If it requires Christians to deny themselves—to renounce their own righteousness and selfishness—to surrender all to God, and be what it requires, in evil as

well as good report; this love leads them to obey. No duties will be omitted, no expressions of regard neglected. Continually in all their actions will they have respect unto its righteous commandments. The study of it is sweet and entertaining; and they fear not boldly to announce their determination, by the assistance of divine grace, to keep his statutes always, even to the end.

Like a true friend, the Christian sees an *unspeakable pleasure in the word*. 'Tis agreeable to his soul. Are young minds delighted with history, with discoveries in the arts, with pieces of elegant composition and refined poetry? How much more is the Christian delighted with the word? New and affecting scenes daily rise to his attentive mind. The beauty of consistence and harmony is seen in the whole. The history of divine love—the glorious plan of redemption and of the effectual grace of God to the rebellious, are more delightful to him than language can express.

Experienced Christians tell us that in all the scenes of joy thro' which they have passed for fifty or sixty years, none have been found equal to those which arise from the word. These joys leave no sting behind, and are the foretaste of greater and everlasting pleasures at the right hand of God.

The Christian also shews his love to the word as men commonly do to a beloved object. If we love a thing we think of it—we commend it; absence is painful and we are unwilling to part with it. Such is the love of the Christian to the word; 'tis much in his mind, 'tis an exhaustless subject of his contemplation, he wishes to keep in it. He can sin-

cerely commend it to others:—knowing it contains the way of life, and treasures which are wanted by all his fellow-men, he says, *Oh, come and see how good the Lord is*. He earnestly desires and endeavors that his children, his friends and neighbors, should become acquainted with it. If, for a time, he forgets it or cannot attend to it, how grievous is the scene? it seems to him as though the greatest beauty was withdrawn, and there were charms in nothing beside. He cannot bear to part with it.

The cause of this high estimation—this strong attachment and delight is of a peculiar nature; *the very great purity of the word*. David saw and felt this to be the case; and there are thousands who can accord with him.—'Tis not because it threatens them who injure us, or those with whom we are at variance. Nor is it because it promises good to us. Indeed it is valuable on this account; but the purity of the way in which it promises or threatens is the principal inducement.—And if we examine the word we shall find,

It exhibits a most pure and spotless character of the great Jehovah. While it discovers him to be the all-sufficient, the almighty and uncreated sovereign of all, it discovers that his purity, his freedom from sin and all unrighteousness is commensurate with his infinity. It shews this of him in all his creating, governing and redeeming works, each of which is an extensive field and each is filled with his purity.

It likewise discovers a pure law which admits of no sin or impiety whatever—that requires truth in the inward parts and love unfeigned. The commandment is pure—it re-

quires love. All the Christian is required to do is an expression of love; nothing is required arbitrarily, but all as the path of love. This love respects God, our fellow-creatures and ourselves; and it respects them in proportion to their importance in the scale of being. What requirement can be purer than to love the Lord our God with all our heart—and our neighbor as ourselves? Disinterested affection, and denying ourselves for the greater good of others is the spirit of it. No partial, selfish or contracted affections are allowed.

Further, it makes known a *pure Heaven for the upright*, and in this way engages the heart and yields ineffable satisfaction. Christians may know that when they depart out of this world, they are going to a place where sin can never enter; and where they may be forever delighted in the purest employments which immortals can be engaged in—where nothing enters that defileth or maketh a lie.

Besides, it holds up a *system of pure doctrines*.—The doctrines collected by human reason from the light of nature, have all been mixed with great impurity, both in their nature and effect. But these tend to one point, to humble the creature and exalt God. The purity of the plan of redemption—of the divine sovereignty—and of salvation by free grace, in a way abounding to the praise of the glory of God, and the everlasting security of fallible creatures, is a powerful inducement to ardent love.

This word *condemns* all sin—it tolerates no iniquity even in thought—it never admits sins of infirmity—They are all unequivocally condemned. No language so forcibly and universally con-

demns and disapproves of that worst of evils as the word of God. The denunciations against it are enough to make the stoutest hearts tremble.

Further, it exhibits many precious human characters. The characters of Jesus as man—of Abraham, Moses, Noah, Daniel and Job—of Isaiah, Paul and all the apostles, are delightful because of the degrees of purity which appear in them. Upon reading their respective histories, the purified mind of a Christian is struck with that exemplary benevolence, weanedness from the world, and everything truly laudable and pure that appears in them. As he is delighted to hear of such characters, an account where he cannot be imposed upon engages his love and confidence. The purity of the character recommended and to be sought, also renders the word rich and entertaining beyond any other book.

It contains the *purest maxims of morality*. It extends its information to all conditions, situations and relations of life. It directs to such ways of thinking and acting, as can never allow the evils of pride, jealousy, prejudice, or the seeds of discord, confusion or war. Were its maxims followed, how pure would society be? Mankind would live together as a “band of brothers,” and the nations *learn war no more*.—This time also it *foretels*. The promises of the Millennium, and a state of purity for a thousand years, are published in the word. Amid the conflicts of the present state there is much sin and unhappiness. There will be a time of peace. *Righteousness shall be built up, and all the upright shall glory*. Then holiness to the Lord shall be written upon every heart

and upon the common utensils of life.

This word also *exhibits a way to purify the heart of man.* A fountain is set open for Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. By it men may be purified from their guilt, their blindness, unbelief, dominion of sin, and finally from the existence of it in the soul. Means and ways to cleanse the heart and to purify it unto perfection are made known. In a word, *it contains the only true religion.* It discovers the only way in which God can appear glorious in his holiness, while sinners are saved. It discovers the true nature of moral obligation; shews us what we are and what we ought to be, and enjoins a religion suitable for such creatures as men are.

When all these things are bro't into view by the divine word, it must appear that its purity is very great, and there is sufficient reason for all the love and attachment which the servants of God feel towards it.—

In the foregoing observations we have a mark of the true Christian. The question then may arise, Do we thus esteem the word of God? Is it a most precious and delightful volume? Do we read it, desire it, and cleave to it as something better than life? And does this attachment arise from its very great purity? The pure in heart understand it; to them it is an incomparable book. Let conscience remind the reader whether these are his feelings.

How deplorable is the case of those countries which are not favored with this precious word! Christians, extend your views and see the wretched consequences, both of a temporal and moral kind, which follow the want of

the word—and it should seem, if you have one spark of that Christian benevolence which dwelt in the heart of David and other scripture saints, you will feel disposed to maintain it among yourselves, and to extend its salutary influence to others. If the exercise of true benevolence is pleasing to you, you can never be gratified in a higher degree than by imparting this word, rich in purity, to those *who sit in darkness and the shadow of death.* What more gratifying, than to send so valuable a present to the heathen? By imparting it to them you do not lose it, but enjoy it the more. This is a kind of business in which you “grow rich by giving;”—thousands may be made happy, and by the same act your own felicity increased. In this sense, then, *Let charity have its perfect work.* Amen.

ALANSON.

Sanctified Afflictions.

A POSTATE man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward. This is the language of inspiration, and it is the language of experience. While God is daily conferring favors upon us, he is at the same time bearing constant testimony against our sins, by giving to us the cup of sorrow. Disappointed hopes, losses, pains and natural death, must be endured by man. While roses are scattered by the side of his path through life, these roses are found to grow on thorns. The present state is every way suited to be a state of disappointment and trial to man.

It ought to be our constant endeavor to derive benefit from our afflictions. If they be sanctified to us, as they are to all God's

people, we shall be enabled to say with the Psalmist, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.* This pious man found his troubles operating for his spiritual and everlasting good. He was excited by them to learn God's statutes, or to study and obey his revealed will. Divine truth became sweeter than honey to his taste. His love to God's character, law, government and grace, was increased, and he was engaged to run the way of his commandments with the greater delight.

It is the design of the present essay to inquire when it can be said that our afflictions or trials, work for our good, or when they are sanctified to us? This subject is interesting to all who are in this vale of tears; and must engage the serious attention of all who love God. The humble and the patient children of sorrow, are prepared to receive instruction on a subject which constantly occupies their thoughts, and furnishes matter for daily self-examination.

The subject is very copious; and nothing more will be attempted in this essay than to collect and bring into view some of the principal evidences of sanctified afflictions.

I. Our afflictions promote our best good, when we acknowledge and adore the hand of God in bringing them upon us.

God is the universal Creator. All creatures and events both in the natural and in the moral world, must be, and forever remain under his government. If creatures could hold their existence of themselves, they would become independent of God, and might control his designs.

To suppose any part of the creation to be freed from the di-

vine government, would be attended with the same absurd consequences. If any part of the creation could govern itself, that part might set up a claim in opposition to the designs of Jehovah, and defeat his purposes, in giving birth to creatures. Some contend that God maintains a general providence but not a particular one, over the works of his hand; and represent it as beneath the notice of the infinite mind, to regard the minute parts of the creation. But let such persons consider that a general providence implies the government of all the particular things of which it is composed, and that all parts of the divine plan are connected, and therefore a denial of a particular providence, goes to a denial, that God governs the world. There is a connection between the opening of a flower and the rise of a nation, and the direction of a mote and the fall of an empire, which is discerned by the divine mind. Though such knowledge is too high for us, it is not too high for the mind of Jehovah, and heightens the idea of his infinite greatness; when we consider him as governing all creatures and events, both great and small, we may discover something of that glory, which demands our admiration and praise.

It is abundantly revealed in the holy scriptures, that the evils which men endure, are inflicted by divine Providence. Amos iii. 6. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Lam. iii. 38. "Out of the mouth of the Most High, proceedeth not evil and good?" It is unnecessary to spend time in proving a doctrine which is found on almost every page of the inspired volume. If it were a fact, that our troubles were the fruit of accident or

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chance, or blind fate, we must be inconstolable under them. But we are certain, that "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground."

We may be rationally convinced that the evils which we endure, proceed from the hand of God; and yet we may practically refuse to acknowledge and adore his agency. There is a wide difference, in the present case, between acknowledging and *murmuring*, and acknowledging and *adoring*. The former conduct, characterises the wicked, the latter characterises the righteous. What a vast difference was there between the acknowledgment which Pharaoh paid to Jehovah, from that which was paid by Moses? Pharaoh was compelled to acknowledge the hand of Jehovah in bringing the plagues upon Egypt, but while he made this confession, his heart rose up against the church of Israel and their God. Moses acknowledged the divine hand in bringing judgments upon the Egyptians and the Israelites, and at the same time he adored or revered him who was revealing his wrath against the disobedient. The devils acknowledge the existence of the only living and true God; but in the moment of the confession they tremble with horror, and are filled with enmity and pain. All the godly have a pleasing belief in the divine government, in the most trying seasons, and rejoice, in a higher or lower degree, in the dominion of infinite wisdom and love. They see the hand which is stretched out in a way of correction as well as in a way of mercy.

As David was fleeing before his son Absalom, Shimei came

forth and cursed him. He cast stones and dirt at David and all his army. Abishai one of David's generals said unto the king, "why should this dead dog curse my lord the king. Let me go over I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, what have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David. Who then shall say, why hast thou done so?" (2 Sam. xvi. 9, 10.)

When Job's substance and children were taken from him in one day, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i. 21.) The Apostle saith in Heb. xii. 9, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live?" From these instances, with many more which might be adduced, it is evident that pious men acknowledge and adore the divine hand, in laying the load upon them. If when we are afflicted, we eventually find our minds driven further from God, and a cheerful acknowledgement of his chastising hand, we have just cause to be alarmed with ourselves. But let us not conclude in a moment when we first enter into the furnace of affliction, that God hath forsaken us, because we have not that lively sense of his perfection and his providence which we may have had heretofore. If we find within ourselves, that amidst all the tumult and darkness of our minds, we have a fixed determination to trust in God though he slay us, we shall find some encouragement to hope that hereafter light will break in upon

our minds, and that the present scourge will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

So long as we look no higher than second causes to find the author of our troubles, we shall pay no homage to God and shall murmur at his dealings. Let the heart be placed upon the perfect character and government of the Most High, and we shall be stilled from complaining of our lot, and shall with Moses, Job, David and other saints, both in the Old Testament and in the New, feel a holy reverence towards him, who is pleased to chastise us. No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; but when it is sanctified, it produces a peace and a joy, to which the men of this world are strangers. All things work together for good to them that love God, and the light and momentary afflictions of this life, will work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory in the world to come.

II. It is good for us to have been under the rod, when we are led to a clear discovery of our sins, and a cordial acknowledgement of the divine justice and wisdom in our chastisement. "I know O Lord that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The eyes of the pious Psalmist, were opened more clearly than ever upon his sins, and he felt that God was perfectly just in the present affliction.

Job saith in his address to the Lord near the close of his long and heavy trials, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Observe the language of the faithful while Jerusalem lay in ruins, and its inhabitants were either slain by

the sword, or gone into captivity.

"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." The penitent Jews after their return from Babylon, confessed that God was just in all that he had brought upon them, that he had done right and that they had done wickedly.

The primitive Christians, while they were in bonds and imprisonment, and were exposed to meet death in its most dreadful forms, had a deep impression that they were among the chief of sinners, and thought themselves honored by being accounted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name.

Even Christians have but a small degree of knowledge of the depravity of their hearts, and the sins of their lives, until they are called to pass through some painful trials. Prosperity is apt to lull the mind to sleep, to abate its devotion, to slacken its watchfulness, and to throw a languor over all its exertions. How natural is it for us to say, when our mountain seemeth to stand strong, that we shall never be moved, or that adversity will never overtake us? When Christians are indulging this frame, they are preparing the way, to meet with some disappointment, worldly loss or bereavement, or to be scourged in their own persons. When God is pleased to afflict them, they will be roused to self-examination and prayer. They will not pretend to the knowledge of all the reasons, why God is now contending with them, but they will see enough in themselves to discover to them the fitness, the necessity, and the justice of the present rod.

Instead of wondering that they are taken in hand by the present

correction, they will rather wonder that they have escaped so long, and have enjoyed so much prosperity. Saith the patient Christian in his afflictions, "I am convinced that I am a great sinner, and that I deserve all the expressions of divine wrath against the wicked, in time and in eternity. How shamefully have I forgotten God and been unmindful of the rock of my salvation? I have refused to give God the throne in my heart, and have been setting up idols there. I have shamefully neglected to reverence God's name and day, and have attended the ordinances of his house with coldness and indifference. I have not placed a just value on the faith once delivered to the saints, and have not been valiant for the truth upon the earth. How unfaithful have I been in the discharge of the duties which I owe to my family, to the church and to the commonwealth? I have neglected to instruct, counsel and warn, those to whom I have had near access; and have said to them by my example, that religion is of no importance, and that worldly glory constitutes the happiness of man. What abundant cause have I to mourn before God, that I have indulged so much malice towards my fellow men? that I have been so unwilling to forgive my enemies? and have been so ready to rejoice at their overthrow? What impure thoughts have I indulged, and how much have I done to encourage the licentious in their conduct? I have not maintained the justice, the mercy or the truth, which the divine law and the gospel requires. I have coveted my neighbor's substance and enjoyments; I have envied his superior prosperity and gifts, and have been discontented

with the place, assigned me in the world.

"How often have I despised the only Saviour of sinful men? and since I have been numbered among his followers, how unfaithful have I been, to the duties of my holy profession? I have solemnly engaged to view myself as my own no more, and to be wholly devoted to the Redeemer, in life and in death. How cold have been my affections towards him, who is the great Immanuel, God with us? In how many ways have I sought to shun the cross, and to enjoy the smiles of an ungodly world? Christ's kingdom is of infinite worth, but I have refused to promote its interest as became me, and have symbolized with the god of this world. I have abundant cause for deep humiliation, that I have abused my mercies, and have been so incorrigible under afflictions. Many promises of amendment have I broken, and I have paid little regard to my covenant bonds. I might justly be crushed by the present rod, and become a monument of God's everlasting wrath. I should have no just cause of complaint, were I deprived of all hopes, and doomed to dwell in the regions of eternal despair. But, O thou God of grace! save me I beseech thee! Correct me in measure and in mercy. Let it be the fruit of this affliction to take away sin, and to prepare me for the service and enjoyment of thyself forever!" When such are the breathings of the heart in a time of trouble, affliction is not sent in vain unto the subject.

When God's children are under the rod, they will be convinced of the wisdom, as well as the justice, of the present chastisement. O Christian, is thy world-

ly substance taken from thee? Thou wilt be led to inquire, whether thy heart has not been too much placed upon it, and whether this extraordinary attachment has not rendered it necessary that thy present loss should be sustained.

Set thy affections more abundantly on things which are above, and be more engaged than ever in laying up a treasure in heaven. Hast thou met with ingratitude and unkindness from one of thy fellow-creatures on whom thou hast conferred many benefits? Let this requital of evil for good serve to teach thee the folly of trusting in an arm of flesh, and engage thee to trust in the living God. Hast thou not fondly doated on the person who now seeks to pierce thee to thy heart? Let the reception of evil for good bring thy benevolence to the trial, and engage thee to imitate thy Saviour in the forgiveness of enemies. Hath God taken from thee, by death, thy bosom friend, or the child of thy love? Ask thyself whether the deceased had not taken the place of God in thy heart, and rendered the present blow a necessary one for thy best good. Be assured that thou must be divorced from thy idols, or from God. And as thou art one of his children, he will take from thee the object of thy idolatrous love. Thy case would be deplorable indeed, if under thy bereavement thou couldst justly take up the lamentation of Micah, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?"

Art thou in a state of languishment, or pain of body, and hast thou wearisome days and wearisome nights appointed unto thee? Inquire whether thou wast not too confident of the continuance of health in former days, and

whether thou wast not unthankful to him who was the health of thy countenance. Perhaps thou hadst some favorite plan to accomplish, and wast confident that thy strength and vigor would be continued until thou hadst realized thy strong hopes. Is it not just and wise in God, to convince thee of thy arrogant presumption, by making thee to feel that thy breath is in thy nostrils, and that thou must soon be laid in the grave? Hast thou not cause to bless God that he is now teaching thee the vanity of this world, and exciting thee to ripen for the joys of a glorious immortality?

We are inclined to say, that some other affliction would be better suited to promote our best good, than the present, and that some other time would be a more fit time than the period that is chosen. But how incompetent judges are we, what is wisest and best to be done? If we were to be our own judges in the present case, we should strive to pitch upon a trial, and for a time of suffering, which would lead us to avoid the cross, and leave us strangers to our own hearts. We might, indeed, by planning for ourselves, be involved in far greater difficulties than the present, and sink into despair. God, who knoweth our particular frame and temper, best knoweth when and how to try us, and how long to continue us under the rod. If we derive spiritual benefit from the afflictions which we endure, we shall be humbled for our sins, and we shall be still and know that the Lord He is God. We shall no longer say, any other trouble rather than the present, and any other time to endure it rather than the present; but we shall say, "O Lord, thy will be done, both

as to the kind and continuance of affliction. Oh, cause me to adore thy justice and thy wisdom, and humbly to implore thy mercy."

Those who make the knowledge of their hearts their study, will not pass through days of adversity, without discovering more than ever before their sins, and without viewing them in new points of aggravation. Sins which had been forgotten will be called to remembrance, and the aggravating circumstances which attended them will rush upon the mind. The humbled penitent will now feel, that the divine justice would shine with distinguished brightness in his eternal condemnation, and will be excited with great and earnest importunity to implore the divine mercy.

(To be continued.)

Memoirs of Mrs. Sarah Dimmuck.

MRS. SARAH DIMMUCK, consort of Deacon Oliver Dimmuck of Mansfield, Connecticut, was born Sept. 9th, 1744, in Mansfield, of pious and reputable parents—Capt. Samuel and Mrs. Sarah Gurley. When she was in the 12th year of her age, her mother departed this life, in the triumphs of hope, faith, and holy joy. At, or about this time began the following exercises of mind; which she is desirous to have recorded as a testimonial of the divine goodness, truth and faithfulness, and in hope that by the blessing of God, it may be useful to her children and friends, and others who may read.

By reason of great and long continued weakness, she was unable, at the penning of this narrative, to give more than some general hints of her exercises—whereas, had she been able to write, or

to recollect, as she once was, a more full and interesting account might have been obtained. The account, in substance, as written from her mouth, is as follows.

"I was thoughtful about my soul's salvation from childhood; and entertained some hope that I met with a change of heart, when I was about 9 or 10 years of age. My mind was then very tender, and often affected with divine things. I remember my mother once said, in my hearing, that if she should be saved, and any of her children should be lost, she should acquiesce in their condemnation; which very much affected my mind. After my mother was taken from me, I began to feel more sensibly the necessity of having a friend in God, and obtaining pardon and sanctification. Accordingly I set myself more earnestly to seek the divine favor. At times, when the loss of my pious and tender mother was fresh in my mind, my concern for my salvation was so great, that I tho't I could be willing to submit to the loss, even of so dear a mother, and to experience a similar loss every day, were it possible, if it might be sanctified to bring me to the choice of God for the guide of my youth and my eternal portion. But this engagedness lasted not long. By degrees youthful follies and vanities drew off my attention, and abated the fervor of my mind towards eternal things. I had, however, frequent alarms, and as frequently renewed my resolutions to be for God and devote myself to his service. I continued to have such-like exercises of mind till I was about 20 years of age; at which time it pleased God to give me a deep sense of the evil of sin. It now appeared in its true colors, exceeding sinful; and

I felt myself exceedingly bowed down under the weight of it. In this state I continued for several months. In the 20th year of my life I entered the marriage state—soon after which, this burden of sin continuing, Satan was permitted greatly to distress my mind with temptations and evil suggestions. It was sometimes suggested that I should be immediately carried away, or destroyed in an awful and surprising manner—that my sins were unpardonable, and my damnation sure and certain. I was harrassed with doubts relative to the being of a God, and blasphemous tho'ts respecting his perfections and government—till at length, being almost worn out by distress and anguish of mind, thro' the buffetings of Satan, I saw that I could do *nothing*—that I had no strength to defend or help myself—that all my struggles availed nothing, and that if I perished I must perish; and was about to give up all for lost, when, to my apprehension, Satan was restrained, and things were opened to my view in a far different manner from what they had been, at least for months and years before. I now viewed the blood of Christ sufficient to wash away all sin, felt surprisingly freed from the burden of sin, and salvation for my soul appeared *possible*. Often did I groan out, while borne down with the burden of sin, Oh, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! But now I saw the blood of Christ sufficient to remove the guilt, subdue the power, and wash away the pollution of sin. This state of mind, and these views I had, about the time of the birth of my first child, which was in the 22d year of my age. After this my mind was much disgusted by the disputes and different senti-

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ments which prevailed in that day, relative to the end and design of the means of grace, the terms of admission into full communion in the church, and many other points. I spent much tho't and labor respecting these things, but still found my mind involved in darkness and doubts.—At length I became satisfied, that however important it may be to understand, and be rightly established in these points, yet the most essential thing to be attended to, is, *the practice* of religion. The duties of the first and second table, I found to be plain and easy. There was no doubt in respect of my duty to love God, and obey him in all his revealed will. Accordingly I formed a resolution to spend more of my time and strength in doing what God in his word and providence should point out to be my present duty;—and God was pleased to make obedience very pleasant and delightful, so that I could say that I ran in the ways of his commandments with great delight. My whole mind and heart seemed to centre in a desire to obey God's will, with my might. And tho' I saw great deficiencies in my best services, yet this was not a discouragement, but rather an excitement to strive for greater perfection in obedience.—Not that I expected or wished to be justified in this way; the way of justification thro' the atonement and righteousness of Christ appeared all-glorious; and to this way my soul cleaved in the utter rejection of all others. It was the reasonableness and suitableness of obedience to God that captivated my soul to it; and I longed to express my love and submission to God in this way. This ardor and delight in God's service, was not, however, uninterrupted, during

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the time respected. I frequently felt heart-rifings and opposition to the providential dealings of God. When my consort was repeatedly laid upon a bed of sickness and bro't near the grave, and his parents aged, and needing constant attention and assistance, whereby my whole time and strength were consumed in labor and care, so that I felt almost overwhelmed, I was often ready to say with Jacob, "all these things are against me," and to query why I should thus be distinguished by affliction, feeling that I was hardly dealt with: Yet such checks and reproofs were again and again set before my mind as silenced my repinings; shewed me the reasonableness and beauty of obedience, and tended to animate and excite me still vigorously and perseveringly to go on in the discharge of duty. I now upon recollection, loath and abhor myself for the stubbornness and perverseness of my heart, and admire the patience and long-suffering of the infinite Jehovah, that he should bear with my stubbornness and forgive my rebellions, and not blot my name out of his book of life. In this state of mind I continued from the 22d to the 32d or 33d year of my life. In all this time I was never much exercised with fears of dying, altho' I was not assured of an interest in Christ; my whole attention and great desire was to perfect obedience in the fear of God.

About the 33d year of my life, it pleased the Lord to take away from me by death two brothers and a sister, all in the course of four months. These sudden and unexpected deaths of persons so near to me, alarmed me much, and led me to inquire more particularly into my own preparedness for death. God seemed now to call

upon me to be also ready; and as upon reflection I could not assure myself, that I was ready or prepared; it therefore appeared to be my duty and that God particularly required of me, to make my calling and election sure. Accordingly I set about the great work with fixed determination to go thro' with it, feeling my dependence, and willing to wait God's time to manifest himself to my soul, well knowing that if he was pleased to delay this to the last moments of my life, he would do me no wrong; but that it would be infinite condescension and grace, if he should *then* appear for me, to give the comforting assurance of his love. I wished to have a true gospel discovery of Christ, and the way of salvation by him. I greatly dreaded having my mind led away by any false and imaginary discovery of things; and being sensible that my heart was deceitful above all things, and not to be trusted, I begged of God to *search it*, and see if there were any evil way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. After this, being tried in my mind relative to a certain supposed duty, while I sat musing on the subject, and desiring to know and do the will of God, I was led to see the great imperfection of all my duties—that even my best services were full of imperfection. I saw the law to be holy, just and good, and spiritual. It appeared exceeding broad, as extending to all things, and cursing for the least transgression or deficiency. This view brought a great weight of guilt upon my mind, which it seemed would overwhelm and sink me. At length it occurred that I had present duty to perform; accordingly I resolved with myself—"I will at-

tend to all the duties of my family and station to which God is calling me ; and will do all the good I can, and if I perish, I perish." Upon which resolution I arose from my seat, and immediately felt a degree of relief ; though no particular views of divine things presented to my mind for some minutes—but as I was going to prosecute my resolution, I had occasion to open a door of the house ; and as I opened the door, God opened to the view of my mind the door of hope for sinners, in the gospel, in such a manner as filled my soul with amazement. The wisdom, love and grace of God, in the plan of salvation, shone with such lustre upon my mind, that I stood astonished. I can think of nothing more expressive of the view I then had, than what is said of Stephen when he saw the heavens opened, and beheld the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. The way of salvation now appeared with a lustre I had never beheld before. I saw clearly that Jesus the mediator of the new covenant had fulfilled the law, and that he is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This effectually removed the burden which a sense of defects had brought upon my mind, and enlarged my desires after God, and delight in him, to an inconceivable degree. My whole soul was in a transport with a view of the wondrous plan of salvation. I could not but wonder why all men were not ravished and transported with this plan, the effect of the eternal wisdom and counsel of the triune God. And now I beheld such a glory and beauty shining in the sovereign, free and eternal electing love of God, as I never saw before.

Electing love I saw lay at the bottom of the whole scheme of redemption ; were it not for electing love, and grace, never would any of mankind be saved. And I longed to have all the world convinced of this glorious truth. This I consider as a special sealing time ; a time in which God sealed his love to my heart ; tho' as to my particular interest in the great salvation, I had no special assurances ; but I had not then, nor have I had since, any uncomfortable thoughts respecting it. Upon reading, in the evening after this view of things, in a book entitled *Sacramental exercises*, I found the following exclamation and desire, "Oh, that I could love thee better than any saint on earth, or angel in heaven." Immediately upon reading the words, I felt my heart going out in desires corresponding with the petition, and was filled with the most ravishing views of the glory of God, shining in the face of Christ. After this, for months my whole work was praise. There seemed to be no room for petition ; except as a certain one petitioned, "Lord stay thine hand ; thy servant is a clay-vessel." *This*, I often said in my heart both then and since, *is a weight of glory*. These things have filled my mind ever since ; and many refreshing hours have I experienced from time to time in viewing the wonders of redeeming love. Yet my spirit groans under a sense of sin and imperfection ; and longs to be freed from the body of this death. And now when my dissolution approaches, and I expect soon to depart, I can say, through grace, that death is no terror to me ; or rather I can say, to be dead I am not afraid. Death, in itself is terrible—but by the death of

Christ it has lost its sting; and I can adopt the words of the apostle in his holy triumph, "Oh death, where is thy sting?" and when he was near closing life by martyrdom, "I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course—I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

TO THE EDITORS OF THE CONNECTICUT EVANGELICAL MAGAZINE.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following letter was lately sent from a clergyman to his brother in this state, without any design or expectation of its appearing before the public. By the request of several Christian friends it is now transmitted to you; if in your judgment it will answer any purpose in promoting the great object of your useful magazine, you are at liberty to publish it.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I ENUMERATE it among my mercies, that providence has cast my lot so near you, that I can sometimes enjoy the pleasure and improvement of your society and correspondence. I have only to condemn myself, that the most abundant means produce so little fruit, and that I so unfaithfully improve my many advantages of promoting my own highest and best interest as well as that of others. I now write to you with very peculiar sensations and impressions of divine mercy, never

before experienced; too great almost to be realized, and such as seem to confound and overwhelm my feeble powers of utterance.

I would pause to echo (as an address to my own soul) the devout language of the Psalmist: "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and his wonderful works to the children of men!" For who can be under greater obligations to praise him than I am? I ask myself whether there be not a great mixture of selfishness in my present exercises of joy? I doubt not but there is; for tho', if I know any thing of my own heart and moral temper, I really desire the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and feel a sensible satisfaction in hearing of, or witnessing the apparent conversion of any one sinner; yet I must acknowledge that my sense of divine mercy and my obligation to thankfulness are more deeply impressed, when the glorious Redeemer condescends to come under my roof, and by his spirit applies the saving benefits of his dying love, to the dear partner of my earthly comforts and cares, as I humbly hope he hath done. And I am ready to exclaim, Oh! the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, is exceedingly abundant! This is to have an help meet indeed, and to obtain favor from the Lord; that my companion and fellow traveller through the wearisome pilgrimage of mortal life and labors, should become a fellow traveller to the Zion above; a fellow laborer in the vineyard of Christ; a fellow helper of my spiritual joys; and a fellow heir of the grace of eternal life! Oh, how rich the grace! How infinitely unworthy am I of such a mercy! How endearing is that conjugal union, which is founded upon the

love of God, exercised in Christian fellowship, and sweetened by communications of divine grace ! What sweet counsel do we take together, not only in the things of the kingdom of God, but in all the cares of life and love ! I receive her anew, from the creating hand of her divine Maker, a disciple of Jesus—a child of God ;—as a special gift from the father of mercies ;—the richest token of his love and favor. By this divine visitation, I feel the most abundant cause for humiliation and abasement before God. With what a mixture of infinite mildness and energy am I reprov'd for all my vile ingratitude to God ;—for all my sinful impatience under the dealings of his hand ;—and all my luke-warmness and unfaithfulness in the service of my glorious Redeemer !—Break, Oh my wicked heart,—bleed with Godly sorrow,—while the divine Jesus is addressing me as he did backsliding Peter : “ Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ? feed my sheep and my lambs.”

How desirable is the real Christian ! How fair, how lovely is the image of Christ, drawn upon the heart of a sinful worm ! Such, O my brother, is the appearance of my dear wife. The light of eternal life, evidently seems to dawn upon her soul, and like the morning light to be progressing. She appears, tho' far from being filled with high confidence, and the triumphs of assured hope, to enjoy that calm, rational, composed and serene state of mind, which arises from a view of the spiritual beauty of divine truth, and a heart in a measure truly conformed to the gospel of Christ, and to the character, law and government of the Most High. She seems to have a deep sense of the evil of

sin, and of the wickedness, pride and deceitfulness of her heart ; so that she rejoices with trembling, and relates her exercises, and the reasons of her hope, with meekness and fear. But her heart and treasure appear to be in heaven. Her bible is precious to her ; it is the man of her counsel. She is constantly discovering new beauties in it, and progressing in divine knowledge. Christ appears lovely to her in the holiness and benevolence of his character ; and the greater part of her time is divided between her bible and her closet.

As to her exercises in time past, ever since the death of our little son in —, her mind, at times, seems to have been very deeply impressed with the things of eternity. These seasons of serious tho'tfulness, however, have been very short and fleeting, soon succeeded by an entire stupidity and inattention. This good, however, resulted ; she obtained speculative conviction of certain important gospel doctrines, which she at first opposed, but finally embraced as true. Of late her religious attention hath been renewed ; I believe that her anxiety for her sister, on account of her dangerous state of health, was the mean in the hand of God, of turning her attention to her own spiritual concerns. It is now more than a fortnight since I discovered in her satisfactory evidence to my own mind that she had experienced a change of heart. This idea however I carefully concealed from her ; she professed no hope for herself, but was concerned that her anxiety and distress were gone, she knew not how, nor why ; and she thought herself to be sinking into the most awful stupidity.—Immediately upon my return from

a short journey, she told me she had had special comfort in religion and religious duties, while I was gone; and I prayed and hoped and believed while absent, that I should find her in the state that I did.

I will not ask you to excuse this long letter. It is upon a subject with which my heart is filled, and I could not well have said less. I know that you and my dear sister will rejoice with me, and join in thanksgiving to God.—The humble shall bear thereof and be glad. Bless the Lord, O my soul! What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits!

ANECDOTE.

WHEN the town of Newport was garrisoned by the British troops, Mrs. ——— was a widow with three young children; one of whom, about six years of age, was constitutionally feeble, and often sick. The mother was under the necessity of laboring for a subsistence; and was often interrupted and prevented from working by the illness of her child, who, at times, required her whole attention. This, with the uncertainty of supplies in a time of war, and the occasional scarcity of provisions, reduced her in some instances to great straits, in which she had an opportunity of observing, in a plain manner, the care of divine Providence.

At a certain time, she had been confined with her child, and was destitute of money. Flour was scarce in town, and at a high price; and for a day and a half she had used potatoes as a substitute, and then saw no prospect of obtaining a supply. After the family had dined, the sick child,

who generally had an appetite for nothing but bread, looking wishfully at her mother, said, "I feel like the Roman Emperor (meaning the Grecian Father confined by the Roman Emperor) for had I a piece of mouldy bread it would be sweet to me." After she spoke, and while the mother was wiping the tear from her eye, a little dog, which had been lying before the fire, arose and went out at the door. In a few moments he returned with a fair, hard biscuit in his mouth, which he dropped at the feet of the child. The mother took it, and cutting out the parts marked with his teeth, furnished her child with that refreshment she appeared to want. The hand of Providence is not the less conspicuous, because it employed an animal whose instincts are remarkable. The instinct of the animal to take the food for himself was counteracted; the supply was seasonable, and in a case which appears to come within the promise of the divine care and blessing.—

Note. The preceding anecdote was communicated to one of the Editors by a Clergyman of Newport, and may be depended upon as a fact.

Religious Intelligence.

MISSIONARIES.

THE Rev. Calvin Ingalls lately returned from a mission of four months to the north-eastern parts of Vermont. He is re-appointed a Missionary, and is expected soon to enter on a mission to the new settlements at the south end of lake George.

The Missionaries now in the service of the Missionary Society of

Connecticut are, the Rev. *David Bacon*, at Michilimakinak, who is directed by the Trustees of the Society to leave that part of the country, and labor in New Connecticut; Messrs. *Joseph Badger* and *Thomas Robbins* in New Connecticut; the Rev. *Seth Williston*, in the south-western counties of New-York and northern counties of Pennsylvania; and the Rev. *Jedidiah Bushnell* and Mr. *Samuel P. Robbins* in the north-western part of Vermont. The Rev. *James W. Woodward* and Mr. *Thomas Williams* stand appointed as Missionaries, and it is expected they will soon commence their respective tours; the former to the south-western counties of New-York and the northern counties of Pennsylvania; and the latter to the counties of Otsego and Delaware, state of New-York.

THE Editors are happy to inform their readers that from accounts lately received from New Connecticut, it appears the revival of religion is rapidly spreading in that country.

ORDINATION.

ON Wednesday, January 18th, Rev. ELIHU SMITH was ordained Pastor of the Congregational Church of Christ in Castleton (Vt.) The Rev. Mr. *Hall* of Granville (N. Y.), made the introductory prayer; the Rev. Mr. *Gridley* of Granby (Ms.), preached a sermon from 1 Tim. i. 11, 12; the Rev. Mr. *Haynes* of West Rutland, made the consecrating prayer, during which the Rev. Messrs. *Gridley*, *Haynes*, *Kent* and *Bushnell* imposed hands; the Rev. Mr. *Kent* of Benson, gave the charge; the Rev. Mr. *Ball* of

East Rutland, gave the right hand of fellowship; and the Rev. Mr. *Preston* of Rupert, made the concluding prayer. The whole was performed in the presence of a large, serious and attentive audience.

POETRY.

COMMUNICATED AS ORIGINAL.

Revival Hymn: or, Joy in a revival of Religion.

1. **B**EHOLD, the day-spring from
on high,
Now visits and illumines this place;
The Father graciously comes nigh,
And sends us down renewing grace;
Rejoice at the revival.
2. 'Tis joy to see the gospel crown'd
With such success;—'tis joy to see
The captive souls, who have lain bound
In nature's chains, now rising free,
In this our bless'd revival.
3. Those hearts which recently were
hard,
Hard as the rock and cold like clay,
The blessings of the cross have shar'd,
And turn'd their feet the narrow way;
How lovely the revival!
4. Those breasts, where pride has been
enthron'd,
Have felt the terrors of the Lord;
In humble penitence have groan'd,
And found sweet comfort from his word;
Delightful the revival!
5. Those who society could seek,
Where pride and folly boldly stood;
Whose lips could with a lightness speak,
Now speak the praises of our God;
So great is the revival.
6. Those who have tasted carnal joys,
And chanted to the viol's sound,
Now find such vain amusement cloy'd,
That they no real pleasure found,
Before our late revival.
7. Those hands that, with an anxious
care,
Sought only wasting good below,

Are lifted now in humble prayer
To God, from whom all blessings flow,
Who gave us this revival.

8. As a light sprinkling lays the dust,
Before the blessings of a shower,
So may these droppings prove the first
Of the displays of sovereign power,
In one entire revival.

9. Since old things have been done away,
And many hearts are formed anew,
They love to meet and praise and pray;
So all the saints in glory do,
Who need no fresh revival.

10. How great the work! the change
how great!
How great the *Love!* from whence it
comes!
The Father fills the mercy seat,
And Christ prepares the heavenly homes,
For those of the revival.

11. O may their crowns of glory prove,
As gems reflecting heavenly light,
Upon our Pastor's crown above,
All glorious—all resplendent bright—
Sweet fruits of the revival.

12. O now that ev'ry eye might see!
O now that ev'ry ear might hear!
O now that ev'ry soul might be
Converted to a Godly fear,
And blest'd with this revival!

13. Now to the cross let sinners come,
And throw down all rebellion there;
The Father has created room,
And Christ inviteth all to share
His grace, in this revival.

14. Let ev'ry soul unite to bring
Some tribute to subduing grace;
Let ev'ry tongue unite to sing
Hosanna—with becoming praise,
To God for this revival.

Donations to the Missionary Society of Connecticut.

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April 7.	A Friend of Missions, for purchase of Books, . . .	5 58
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